

THE QUESTIONING SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN INDOONESIAN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

SITTI YUDIARTI FAJRIAH RUSDI, 2018. *The Questioning Skill Development of the University Students in Indonesian EFL Classroom* (supervised by M. Basri Jafar and Kisman Salija).

The objectives of this research were to investigate the development of students' questioning skill and its impact on their speaking performance in EFL classroom. The research applied an ethnographic study over one semester in the State University of Makassar, Indonesia. It utilised observation and interview as the instrument of the research. The results of this research demonstrated that there are marked differences of the way students develop their questioning skill; The development of students' questioning skills falls into three categories: Lowly Developed Questioning Skill (LDQS), Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill (MDQS) and Highly Developed Questioning Skill (HDQS). In relation to the students questioning skill and the impact on their speaking performance, it also bears marked differences, those are Good Speaking Performance (GSP), Fairly Speaking Performance (FSP) and Weak Speaking Performance (WSP).

Keywords: Questioning skill, speaking performance, EFL classroom

INTRODUCTION

Interaction in the classroom refers to the conversation between teachers and students, as well as among the students, in which active participation and learning of the students become vital. Conversations are part of the sociocultural activities through which students construct knowledge collaboratively. One of the conditions in doing conversation is the presence of questioning. Asking and answering questions are typical interactions and are expected in most classrooms (Weber and Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). A very common exchange is referred to as the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequence Mehan (1979), similar to what Tharp and Gallimore (1988) termed "recitation questioning."

Students' questions play an important role in the learning process as they are a potential resource for both teaching and learning science because questioning is an integral

part of meaningful learning and scientific inquiry. The formulation of a good question is a creative act, and at the heart of what doing science is all about. As Ciccio-Schrimpa and Treiner (2000) have stated, 'Questioning is one of the thinking processing skills which is structurally embedded in the thinking operation of critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving'. Furthermore, there are many roles of question can be used to show the principal roles, such as to stimulate thinking, assess student progress, check on teacher clarity, motivate students, maintain classroom control, provide repetition, emphasize key points, extend thinking skills, gain feedback on teaching/learning, provide revision strategies, create links between ideas, enhance curiosity, provide challenges, and so on (Guihun, 2006). After all Meng, Zhiao et al (2002) stated that teachers' question could be beneficial for both teachers and learners as the act of asking questions could help teachers keep students actively involved in lessons and stimulate them to keep thinking.

Based on the researcher's experience during her first-year study for the magister program in EFL classroom at Makassar State University, only a few of the students are active in giving a question to their lecturer. Moreover, for the presentation session, some of the students ask their friends to create a question to be asked to the presenter; even some of them ask the presenter to give them the question right before they start the presentation. In order to overcome that kind of thing happen, one of the lecturers did a non-stop discussion, where all the students are expected to ask and share their ideas, but still, the class was never balanced for those who speak up and just keep their silence in the class.

Referring to some previous explanations above, and also from the reference that is done by Mahmud (2015) on her study before entitled "*Questioning Powers of the Students in the Class*" said that a teachers' and students' interaction in the class still need to be observed, so the researcher excited to conduct an ethnographic research titled "*The Questioning Skill Development of the University Students in Indonesian EFL Classroom*". The researcher addressed the development of questioning skills used by the students in English as Foreign Language Classroom context.

Based on the background, the purposes of this study are:

- 1) To investigate the development of students' questioning skill in the EFL classroom.
- 2) To analyze the impact of students' questioning skill on students' speaking performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is regarded generally that the issue of body language in language teaching is not remarkably very new. This issue has been observed and researched by many studies with

different aspects and models for sure. Hence, many findings, which have coherent views with this study, have been already published and implemented in language practice. The first, Skilton and Meyer (1993) found that the types of student questions vary with proficiency level, and Spada and Lightbown (1999) found that students' control of question structures in a second language develops in predictable stages. They highlight work by several language-learning theorists arguing for the importance of level-appropriate input.

Other previous researchers also have done their studies related to the question asked in the classroom, Ozcan (2010) on his study "The Effects of Asking Referential Questions on The Participation and Oral Production of Lower Level Language Learners in Reading Classes" aimed at investigating the effect of asking referential question on the oral participation and production of lower level language learners in reading classes. Moreover, King (2010) on her research Facilitating Elaborative Learning Through Guided Student-Generated Questioning concluded that use of the guided student-generated questioning strategy induces students to ask thought-provoking questions and generate elaborated explanations; and these verbal behaviors, in turn, lead to improved comprehension. Throughout this process, the high-level nature of the question stems guides students to activate and use their relevant prior knowledge.

In Jordan, Al-Momani and Al-Momani (2009) investigated the level of questioning skills amongst student-teachers as perceived by their cooperative teachers (i.e. their in-service supervisors), and the effects of a training program designed to develop the subjects' questioning skills. The results showed that the classroom questioning skills level of the participants (who all came from primary schools) was moderate during their training and that there were no differences between participants with regard to their educational background or gender.

As the conclusion, various of researchers' findings above describes that the existence of questioning in classroom interaction is really needed to comprehend the material given in the classroom. Those four previous findings above are related to conduct this research as the references to analyze the variations of questioning skill use by the students.

METHOD

The qualitative research method was an appropriate match for the purposes of this study. This study provides both description and analysis which made it possible to answer the investigator's research questions. Those questions relate to the students questioning skill development and its impact on their speaking performance. Besides, researcher

applied ethnography to describe, interpret, and reveal the meaning of cultural behavior, which is founded in anthropological studies and valuable in the contemporary qualitative inquiry (Bernard, 2002; Wolcott, 1987).

Questioning skill in this term is the variety of questions that were asked by the student to the presenter during discussion sessions, such as informative, understanding, requesting, investigating, producing or examining question.

The subjects of this were EFL students of the undergraduate program at State University of Makassar at the English Education Department, Academic Year 2016/2017. The university is located in Parang Tambung, Tamalate District, City of Makassar, Province of Sulawesi Selatan, and Postal Code 90224. The total number of participants currently undertaken the course of Seminar on ELT which was consisted of six participants.

The researcher was the key instrument in this study to collect the data by observation and interview. There were several procedures had been completed in order to collect the data of this study. the researcher observed the learning process among students and took a seat, for instance, in the back line to clearly watch and record students' learning activities by using a smartphone. While recording, the researcher filled the observation checklist during the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. After that, the researcher transcribed, coded, and labeled the data before analyzing them. To be more specific, the researcher wrote important notes which she watched something specific happening in the classroom. Afterward, the interview was situated in the last meeting to strengthen the assumptions created by the researcher herself based on previous observations.

The data taken by the researcher in accordance with the development of students' inquiring abilities are taken from the observation video of the second, four, eight, nine and ten meetings. The development of students' questioning skill classifications are described as follows:

Classification of Questioning Skill Development Classification	Skill of Question					
	Informat ive Questio n	Understan ding Question	Request ing Questio n	Investiga ting Question	Produ cing Questi on	Examine ing Questio n
Lowly Developed	✓	✓				

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Questioning Skill						
Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Highly Developed Questioning Skill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3.1 The development of the students questioning skill in EFL classroom

The development of students' questioning skill in this research combines Bloom's categories of educational objectives to categorize their development of questioning skill. It is divided by in to three categories, the first, for those who only use informative and understanding question, they are categorized as Lowly Developed Questioning Skill (LDQS). The second, students who are able to develop their skill to requesting or investigating question are categorized as Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill (MDQS), and the last is Highly Developed Questioning Skill, students in this category, are those whodelivered producing or examining question.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. The development of students questioning skill in the EFL classroom

From the data found, the researcher classifies some of these questions in terms of significant development, ranging from lowly developed to highly developed according to existing skills. Below is the thematic matrix in order to facilitate her to classify students with a certain questioning skill development:

Table 4.1: Thematic Matrix on Students' Questioning Skill Development

Grop	Students	Classification	Characteristics
A	Rahmi Anita	Highly Developed Questioning Skill (HDQS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Already have a clear background knowledge before asking a question - relate knowledge from several areas and ask to compare it to the presenter's knowledge - Students could draw conclusions and ask to integrate with the presenters' material given. - Students are able to make a questions based on reasoned argument - The use of critical thinking is essential before giving questions.
B	Ratna Galih	Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill (MDQS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to use background knowledge before giving a question - Students are able in using information to identify patterns or components - Mostly asking in order to get an information about interpreting facts, predict consequences, and translate knowledge into new context
C	Asji	Lowly Developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less background

Grop	Students	Classification	Characteristics
	Hendra	Questioning Skill (LDQS)	knowledge - Mostly asking to recall information - Commonly starting their question with “what is....” - Asking for an example to understand the theme given - Always asking in order to get a new definition or explanation to ease them get a meaning.

a. Highly Developed Questioning Skill

Table 4.2 Highly Developed Questioning Skill

Rahmi		Anita	
Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill	Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill
2 nd	Informative	2 nd	Informative
4 th	Understanding	4 th	Understanding
8 th	Requesting	8 th	Requesting
9 th	Investigating	9 th	-
9 th	-	9 th	Producing
10 th	Examining	10 th	Examining

The table above shows that there are two students (Rahmi and Anita) who have significant development in questioning skills. It was seen from the questions that appeared from each meeting was very varied and represent all the questioning skills exist (informative question until examining question). At the second meeting where the discussion presented was edmodo as a media, Rahmi asked about the reasons why speaker chose edmodo to be presented as material as it is known that there are many that can be used as media. At the next meeting, the material discussed was still around the learning media, while the question asked was "how much the media in teaching could help the teacher to stimulate them in learning?"

the question is categorized as understanding question so it can be concluded that the questioning skill asked by this student increased in an interval of two weeks.

At the eight meeting of observation, these students gradually showed progress at each meeting. At the eighth meeting, Rahmi no longer asked about informative or understanding questions, but she asked to find a significant difference between positive punishment and negative reward and expects an example to make it easier to understand. In detail, it is categorized into the requesting question because it asks to classify the difference from information that the questioner did not understand. Other developments can be seen at the ninth meeting, where the material discussed is about the school library. At this meeting, she showed her probing skills on the investigating skill, that was “can you explain what could be happened when school ask the student to donate a book as a collection of that library?” by this question, she discussed the facts she was getting with material presentation the presenter delivered which is to identify the possibilities that will occur.

It is known that this participant is one of the students with highly developed questioning skill, seen by the table that she filled all the questioning skill table. At the last meeting of this presentation, Rahmi asked about “how effective is SQ3R implemented to encourage students to think critically?” shown on the previous meetings that she asked by informative, understanding, requesting and investigating, this last meeting she intended to know the effectiveness of SQ3R to be implemented in line with students’ critical thinking. it means, Rahmi already had a clear previous knowledge about critical thinking and related it with the implementation of SQ3R. It proves that she 4 has a highly developed questioning skill because she has all the questioning skill variation during observation (first meeting to the last/ 10th meeting).

The next participant with highly developed questioning skill was Anita. Almost the same with Rahmi’s first question, she asked the reason why she chose edmodo as media to be presented as there are many other platforms could be used. While at the eight meeting, Anita was still in an LDQS circle, it was because she was asking an understanding question. In the eight meeting, Anita showed her development by asking a requesting question and producing question, whilst the last meeting she asked was a challenging question. She developed her questioning skill seem like the developing of Rahmi. She improved her skill during the 10 meeting presentation.

b. Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill

Table 4.3 Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill

Ratna		Galih	
Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill	Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill
2 nd	Informative	2 nd	Informative
4 th	Understanding	4 th	Understanding
8 th	Understanding	8 th	Understanding
9 th	Investigating	9 th	Investigating
9 th	-	9 th	-
10 th	Understanding	10 th	Understanding

The students who are categorized into the mediumly developed questioning skill are students with minimal inquiring questions reaching the requesting or investigating question stage. In this table, it can be seen that there are 2 students with the development of the medium, they are Ratna and Galih where they did not reach the six stages of the questions that have been formulated by researchers. As can be seen from the first participant that is Ratna, the development of questions that she experienced was only seen at the ninth meeting in which she revealed her question by using the investigating question skill while in previous or subsequent meetings she asked relying solely on informative skills and understanding questions.

In the second meeting, the questioning skill that Ratna used was the informative question as seen from the question *"Can you tell why edmodo could be a good platform to learn English?"* Then at the fourth meeting, she still used the same questioning skill that was informative question to ask for an example of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the next encounter, which was the eighth meeting, the questioning skill she used has advanced to the understanding stage where she asked the presenter to provide information about how to change the children's mind about punishment clearly described in the previous interpretation that this question is classified into understanding question.

The latest development seen from Ratna was the ability to ask questions on investigating question skill. At this stage, she started looking for information to analyze a case that may occur from the material presented by the presenter. As for the meeting to 10 she did not reach the stage of examining question but instead asked using skill understanding question.

The next participant who has skill development asked at the MDQS stage was Galih. Similar to Ratna, the questioning skill that he had were only developed to investigating skills.

The questions that arose during the observation were only about informative and understanding question. However, Galih also has an increase that can be categorized as MDQS where in the fourth meeting, it used requesting question skill to find out what a good way to do to build the relationship between introverted teachers and students.

c. Lowly Developed Questioning Skill

Table 4.4 Lowly Developed Questioning Skill

Asji		Hendra	
Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill	Meeting	Level of Questioning Skill
2 nd	Informative	2 nd	Informative
4 th	Understanding	4 th	Understanding
8 th	Understanding	8 th	Informative
9 th	Informative	9 th	Informative
10 th	Understanding	10 th	Informative

The development of the last questioning skill found from the coding result was the lowly developed questioning skill (LDQS) where the ability to ask questions they have is just informative and understanding only. As the data we see above, most of them were just informative or understanding questions as described in previous data interpretations. The participants who only reached this stage were Asji and Hendra. Seen in the second meeting where Asji only asked about the benefits of using edmodo for the learning process until at the end of observation that is the tenth meeting he also asked the reason why he chose SQ3R to be applied in the classroom. Where exactly, it has been questioned during the presentation and categorized as an informative question.

The second participant who only reached LDQS was Hendra, his questioning skill only up to the understanding question we can see at four to ten meetings where he only asked for an explanation of the effects of environmental factors or opinion on a case that has been described in the previous presentation.

Boyd & Rubin (2002) stated that student questions in a language classroom are important for a number of reasons which is in line with the evidence researcher found during the observation. The way those questions are handled plays a leading role in setting the tone of classroom discourse—the kinds of questions students ask over the course of a semester is largely shaped by the kinds of material that presenters gave during the presentation.

The above also confirms the results of Dillon's (1988) study that students with the ability to ask have fewer in search of knowledge. Demonstrated by two students with LDQS who have very little variation in expressing their questions because of their lack of knowledge. On the other hand, students with HDQS are able to imagine or even justify a statement from the knowledge they have.

2. The impact of students' questioning skill development on their speaking performance

The data were figured out by means of interview and observation, the researcher chose participants based on the students that have a significant questioning development both highly and lowly developed. Here is the thematic matrix of speaking skills adapted to the theory by Harris (1979) where he uses five components to assess students' speaking abilities; pronunciation, grammar correct, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

Table 4.5: Thematic Matrix on Students' Speaking Performance

Grop	Students	Classification	Characteristics
A	Rahmi Anita Ratna Galih Asji	Good Speaking Performance (GSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The listener is able to understand the meaning of what is said - Have numbers of vocabularies in speaking - Grammatically correct - Confident in expressing their idea
B	Hendra	Fairly Speaking Performance (FSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How they are anxious about performing their ideas/question - Hard to express what is on their mind when they want to speak - Less background knowledge - Could make the listener able to understand the purpose of what is said

Grop	Students	Classification	Characteristics
C	-	Weak Speaking Performance (WSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of vocabulary needed to talk - Lack of self-confidence in speaking performance in front of the class - Less idea to speak - Stammer during expressing their idea

a. Good Speaking Performance (GSP)

Four students (Rahmi, Anita, Ratna and Galih) have been categorized as good speaking performance toward the characteristics in table 4.5. It was concluded that the four of them were categorized to be in the GSP as seen from the researcher's observations who followed their learning process for eleven meetings plus an interview session. In the interview session, researcher could specifically assess their speaking performance because in this process the researcher did not involve other students than the one interviewed at the time.

Extract 1

Speaker	Utterance
R	So it depends on the materials, right? So what's actually make you want to ask?
Rahmi	The first factor is because I don't know, and that is why I ask. Curiosity. Then because of curiosity we can get new things. It likes answer my curiosity.

It can be seen from the statement stated by Rahmi above, that she asked the presenter because she did not have previous information about the material presented by the speaker so she asked. The other thing that makes her ask is because of his high curiosity about the material being delivered. It can help them in improving their performance of speaking achievement because they will gain a lot of knowledge they have not known before. This curiosity also proves that she was really paying attention to the material presented by the presenter and proving her activeness in during the learning process.

Extract 2

Speaker	Utterance
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Speaker	Utterance
R	Directly, first question for you. What makes you interested in asking in the classroom?
Anita	The first is, maybe because I can master the material, basic knowledge, Kak. Second, maybe if the material is not enough, statement is not clear. Second is maybe material is interest and maybe I have basic understanding about the material.

Anita is one of the students with HDQS. The above question is, "what makes you interested in asking in the classroom?" intends to know the reason for asking whether she asked to be considered and participate in the class or because she was attentive to the speaker and needed more understanding of the material presented by the presenters. Want to master the material completely is the first reason she asked the class and the second reason is that because the statement is less clear by the speaker. Anita was answering the questions of researchers with a good fluency and comprehension because during the interview process, both researchers and Anita can understand each other, besides, the duration during the interview process was not a long time because Anita can easily understand the question given. Those are in line with Hedge definition (2000) said that fluency as the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation while comprehensibility is focused on students' understanding about the conversation, those points of speaking are important for the learners to understand English communication.

Extract 3

Speaker	Utterance
R	Do you think that your questioning skill has improved?
Asji	Yes, I think it's improve. Because before I feel scared, but when enter this semester, this subject, the scare is decrease. Because we're never told to make question and now we are told to make question. There is a brave I think.
R	What factor that makes your questioning skill improve?
Asji	Behavior factor. Because now I am not mmm I am not nervous, not scared anymore.
R	Okay. Well, do you think that your questioning skill influence your

Speaker	Utterance
	academic achievement.
Asji	Yes, influence. Because to increase our score, in a class, we have to active, mmm good attendance, but the most important is active I think.

As can be seen earlier, the question the researcher expressed was similar to each participant. Nevertheless, it can be said that hardly any single participant has the same answer. Similar to Asji, she is one of the students in the LDQS category where the questions that arose in every meeting were only about informative and understanding questions. But it was different from her speaking skill because she has good pronunciation, fluency and comprehend ability. Can be seen in the table above, in the first question she expressed her opinion about the speaking skill that she thought was developed. Where, frankly, she felt lack confidence to question because of out of fear, then the day she felt her fear was decreasing and the more courageous to participate in the class because she was asked to ask by her lecturer. Another thing that she thinks can make her skill to develop was due to behavioral factor, in this case, because every meeting he always asks, she was no longer nervous when want to ask in class. Her way of answering questions given by the researcher can be said to be very good in accordance with the criteria expressed by Heaton either in terms of pronunciation, fluency or comprehension.

As for the second question, she said that her activeness in the classroom can affect her speaking performance because in addition to her attendance at each meeting, students who are active in the classroom can also affect its value. As Harris (1979) pointed out that comprehension in brief speaking requires that not only knowing how to produce it well but also understanding when, what and why to produce the language and it really in line with how Asji performed her speaking ability during the interview.

b. Fairly Speaking Performance

Extract 4

Speaker	Utterance
R	What makes you interested in asking question?
Hendra	Materials. The way they explain the materials. That is why I ask.
R	Does your questioning skill improve?
Hendra	Only from the content. If the grammar, I don't care. At least my

Speaker	Utterance
	friends know mm understand. Like about, I ask only what is the title? Why you choose the title? Like that.

Hendra is the second student with LDQS. Unlike the case with Asji, although the questioning skill that he had is less, Hendra was answering the researcher's questions in a simple way. Nevertheless, Hendra is categorized in FSP because different with other participants, Hendra showed his anxious in answering researcher's question. In another hand, he also did not use such a variety of vocabulary, seen by how he repeated using the word '*title*' while he could use another word in explaining example he used.

Overall, he can understand the questions given as well as the researcher as the interviewer can also understand the answer. In the first question, it can be seen that he replied simply also gave a simple explanation that the way the speaker explained their material could not make him understand that was why he gave question. In the second question, Hendra responded by giving example. It can be said that he has a good ability to interact and make others understand what he wanted to convey to his listener, just as the purpose of speaking is to make others understand what we want to deliver. From the above, it can be said that the students' speaking skill also impact the speaking performance of students, especially in one language skills that is speaking.

As we know that the speaking performance becomes one of the benchmarks of a person in assessing his academic ability. Whether he or she expresses opinions based on expert statements or simply spontaneously speaks according to what he wants to say. The results of interviews from some participants said that lack of confidence and habit of talking in the forums make them difficult to express in the classroom. Therefore, the opportunity to give questions in this class becomes an outbreak for them in improving their speaking performance.

The research finding above shows some evidencethat their questioning gave them impact to their academic achievement moreover for their speaking performance. This can be seen from the students' activeness in discussing and interacting with each other during the learning process takes place. As for their speaking skills which are measured according to the speaking aspect proposed by Heaton (1978), those are pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility also evolved with the learning process that makes them much practice to speak up in front of their friend. One thing we should know from the results of this study is

that the questioning habits that students have during the observation process actually affect their speaking ability even though students with LDQS.

CONCLUSION

The first, There was a marked difference in the way the students develop their questioning skill in Indonesia EFL classroom. The development of students' questioning skills falls into three categories: Lowly Developed Questioning Skill (LDQS), Mediumly Developed Questioning Skill (MDQS) and Highly Developed Questioning Skill (HDQS).

Generally, not all students have the same development of questioning skill. HDQS students could give questions in order to ask the presenter to predict or imagine things and also they could give a judgment question of what they already knew. Likewise, students with LDQS were just stuck with an informative and understanding question where they just ask for some examples and additional explanation.

The second, students questioning skill gives impact to their speaking performance. In relation to the students' speaking performance, there was also a marked difference of the students' speaking performance, they are Good Speaking Performance (GSP), Fairly Speaking Performance (FSP) and Weak Speaking Performance (WSP). Those categories reflect the theory of Harris (1979) stated that there were five components which are generally recognized in analyzing speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabs, fluency, and comprehension.

Giving a question for each meeting becomes their habit during the observation. Furthermore, it could be said that being active in the class, asking a question, involve in discussion and speaking up their mind could help them to improve their speaking performance. Statements above prove to them that the higher the students develop their questioning skill, the better speaking performance they have.

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